

Amendments to the Claims are reflected in the listing of claims which begins on page 8 of this paper.

Remarks/Arguments begin on page 16 of this paper.

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Original): Spacer at connecting devices which are adapted to connect discharge devices (2) to packages (3) with liquid products (4), preferably foodstuff products, for discharging said products (4) from the packages (3),
wherein the packages (3) have walls (8) of synthetic material,
wherein the connecting device (1) is adapted to permit products (4) to flow therethrough from the package (3) to the discharge device (2),
wherein the connecting device (1) comprises a tube member (23) which is provided on a first wall portion (8a) of the walls of the package (3),
wherein the connecting device (1) comprises a connecting means (26) which can be fixed to the tube member (23), and
wherein the spacer (19) is provided on the connecting means (26) and adapted to be located in the package (3) in order to, during emptying of said package, keep wall portions thereof at a distance from the connecting device (1) such that said wall portions do not prevent or substantially obstruct emptying of the package,
c h a r a c t e r i z e d i n
that the spacer (19) has resilient properties,

that the connecting means (26), for fixation thereof to the tube member (23), can be brought to cooperate therewith such that it moves with the connecting means (26) in a direction towards a support (29) on which the package (3) is placed with a second wall portion (8b) thereof,

that the spacer (19) by said downward pressing can be brought to engage the support (29) through the second wall portion (8b) such that said spacer (19) at continued downward pressing is compressed from a normal shape (NF) to a compressed shape (KF),

that the tube member (23) has a space (28) in which the spacer (19) can be received when it is compressed and in which it is accommodated in compressed shape (KF),

that the connecting means (26) can be fixed to the tube member (23) when said connecting means (26) is pressed downwards relative to the tube member (23) and said tube member (23) engages the support (29) through said second wall portion (8b), and

that the spacer (19) is provided to spring back to its normal shape (NF) when the downward pressing of the connecting means (26) and the tube member (23) ceases such that said spacer (19) can take up a distance keeping position.

Claim 2 (Original): Spacer according to claim 1, characterized in that the tube member (23) has an annular application surface (30) which can be applied close or substantially close to the second wall portion (8b) when the

connecting means (26) and the tube member (23) are pressed in a direction towards the support (29), such that said application surface (30), in cooperation with the second wall portion (8b), prevents or at least obstructs atmospheric air from penetrating into the package (3) through the tube member (23) and contaminating the product (4) in the package (3).

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): Spacer according to ~~claim 1 or 2~~ claim 1,
c h a r a c t e r i z e d i n

that the spacer (19) and the second wall portion (8b) cooperate with each other such that the second wall portion (8b) compress the spacer (19) when said second wall portion (8b) is pressed against said spacer (19) during deflation or contraction of the package (3) due to generation of a negative pressure therein when product (4) is discharged therefrom, and

that the spacer (19) brings back the second wall portion (8b) by springing back when said suction or contraction force acting on the second wall portion (8b) ceases such that said second wall portion (8b), during discharge of product (4) from the package (3), performs pump movements which affect the product (4) such that discharge thereof is facilitated.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): Spacer according to ~~any preceding claim~~
claim 1, characterized in

that the spacer (19) includes annular parts (31) which are arranged in stagger and connected with each other through connecting members (32) having resilient properties, and

that the spacer (19) is compressible and expands in axial directions relative to the annular parts (31).

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): Spacer according to ~~any preceding claim~~
claim 1, characterized in that the connecting means (26) can be fixed to the tube member (23) through a snap-in connection therewith.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): Spacer according to ~~any preceding claim~~
claim 1, characterized in

that the connecting device (1) includes a tubular member (14) which can be fixed to the connecting means (26), and

that the connecting means (26), for fixation to the tube member (23), can be pressed downwards in a direction towards the support (29) by means of the tubular member (14) of the connecting device (1).

Claim 7 (Original): Spacer according to claim 6, characterized in that the tubular member (14) can be fixed to the connecting means (26) while the connecting means (26) and the tube member (23) are pressed downwards in a direction towards the support (29) or by continue to press the tubular member (14) in a direction towards the support (29) when the tube member (23) engages said support (29) through the second wall portion (8b).

Claim 8 (Currently Amended): Spacer according to ~~claim 6 or 7~~ claim 6, characterized in that the tubular member (14), by pressing thereof against a closing member (13) on the connecting means (26) and in a direction towards the support (29), penetrates said closing member (13) and can be pressed, e.g. by a snap-in action, onto the connecting means (26) when said connecting means (26) has been fixed to the tube member (23) and said tube member (23) is supported by the support (29) through the second wall portion (8b).

Claim 9 (Currently Amended): Spacer according to ~~claim 7 or 8~~ claim 7, characterized in that the tubular member (14), by pressing thereof against a closing member (13) on the connecting means (26) and in a direction towards the support (29), penetrates said closing member (13) and can be pressed, e.g. by a snap-in action, onto the connecting means (26) when the connecting means (26) and the tube member (23) are pressed in a direction towards the support (29) but before said connecting means (26) is fixed to said tube member (23).

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): Spacer according to ~~any preceding claim~~
claim 1, characterized in

that the connecting means (26) has a hole (11) and a member (13)
closing said hole (11), and

that the closing member (13) can be penetrated by means of the
tubular member (14).

Claim 11 (Original): Spacer according to claim 10, characterized in
that the closing member (13) is inclined relative to a geometric axial
centre line (CL) of the hole (11) such that it defines a deep part (35) which is
eccentric relative to the centre line (CL) of the hole (11),

that the tubular member (14) has an end edge (36) which is inclined
relative to a geometric axial centre line (CL) of the tubular member (14) and forms a
tip or point (37) which is eccentric relative to said centre line (CL), and

that the tip or point (37) is provided to be guided into said deep
part (35) when the tubular member (14) is inserted into the hole (11).

Claim 12 (Currently Amended): Spacer according to claim ~~10 or 11~~
claim 10, characterized in

that the tubular member (14) can be inserted into the hole (11) and
pressed onto edge portions (16) of the hole (11) such that the tubular member (14)
adheres to said edge portions (16) and such that connecting members (9, 10) of the
connecting device (1) adhere close to each other,

that the hole (11) in the first connecting member (9) has four, five or six corners (15) and edge portions (16) which extend between said corners (15),

that the tubular member (14) of the second connecting member (10) has a corresponding number of corners (17) and edge portions (18) extending therebetween,

that the edge portions (16) of the hole (11), relative to straight geometric lines (L16) which connect adjacent corners (15) between the edge portions (16) of the hole (11) with each other, are inwardly directed and/or include parts which are inwardly directed towards the centre (C1) of the hole, and

that the edge portions (18) of the tubular member (14), relative to straight geometric lines (L18) which connect adjacent corners (17) between the edge portion (18) of the tubular member (14) with each other, are inwardly directed and/or include parts which are inwardly directed towards the centre (C2) of the tubular member (14).

Claim 13 (Original): Spacer according to claim 12, characterized in that the edge portions (16 and 18 respectively) of the hole (11) and the tubular member (14) respectively, are concave and arcuate relative to the centre (C1 and C2 respectively) of said hole (11) and said tubular member (14).

Claim 14 (Currently Amended): Spacer according to ~~claim 12 or 13~~
claim 12, characterized in that the edge portions (16 and 18 respectively) of the hole (11) and the tubular member (14) respectively, are uniform.

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): Spacer according to ~~any of claims 12-14~~
claim 12, characterized in that the first connecting member (9) is provided
on the package (3) such that the edge 35 portions (16) of its hole (11) has a certain
orientation relative to the package (3).

Claim 16 (Currently Amended): Spacer according to ~~any of claims 1-5~~
claim 1, characterized in that the connecting means (26) includes a
connecting portion (26b) for direct connection and fixation to the tube member (23)
and that the connecting means (26) is a tube having a through passage (26c).

Claim 17 (Currently Amended): Spacer according to ~~any preceding claim~~
claim 1, characterized in that the first and the second connecting
member (9, 10) respectively, consists of elastic material or has at least at the
hole (11) and the tubular member (14) respectively, elastic material.

Claim 18 (Currently Amended): Spacer according to ~~any preceding claim~~
claim 1, characterized in that the first and second connecting
member (9, 10) consist of synthetic material.

Claim 19 (Currently Amended): Spacer according to ~~any preceding claim~~
claim 1, characterized in that the package (3) consists of flexible material
and is designed as a plastic bag.